

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Andrzej Duda of Poland in Warsaw, Poland

February 21, 2023

President Duda. Your Excellency, Mr. President; Ministers, distinguished Ambassadors, and distinguished guests gathered here today; our dear American friends, our allies.

Mr. President, first and foremost, on behalf of myself and the entire Polish delegation, but also on behalf of the entire Polish society and all those present in our country, all the guests, all our friends and neighbors from Ukraine: I would like to thank you for yesterday's visit to Kyiv. It was spectacular, indeed. A very strategic and very political move. Very crucial indeed. That was a political signal.

Especially for Ukraine, of course, to a large extent, it has boosted their morale—I'm convinced about that—the morale of the defenders of Ukraine and all those who today decide about the defense of Ukraine, like my friend, President Zelenskyy, and his team.

But that was also an extraordinary gesture shown to our allies within NATO and, generally, people standing on the side of the free world and the entire global public opinion. Also, it was a signal to those who violate international rules, who invaded a sovereign and independent state that is Ukraine, who are bombing houses, who are destroying the infrastructure which is used by people for their everyday lives.

I'm thinking here, unfortunately, about our European neighbors. I'm thinking about Russia. I'm thinking about Russian authorities; about President Putin, who almost 1 year ago decided to attack a free, independent, and sovereign country on a full scale. He carried out that full-scale attack, because the first attack against Ukraine was carried out in 2014, as a matter of fact. However, after 8 years, Vladimir Putin decided to attack Ukraine on a full scale, causing a tragedy and a catastrophe for millions of the inhabitants of Ukraine and causing a huge crisis, both a crisis of security and economic crisis all over the world and also a humanitarian crisis.

And thus, he doomed millions of people to a tragic fate. Those people had to flee from their country, from bombs, from murders, from rapes—from murders—from horrible, brutal, and bestial treatment from Russian soldiers, unfortunately.

So, having said that, thank you once again for your visit yesterday, Mr. President, because that was a significant sign for all those people, the sign that a free world has not forgotten them; that a free world and its biggest leader, the President of the United States, stands by them.

So I know that perfectly well, Mr. President. I know how big courage it requires. Thank you very much for that. I can imagine it was not easy, especially for all those who are responsible for your security, sir. So please pass my gratitude to them from me. They're standing somewhere in the background but, still, that was hard work that they were doing. So thank you, Mr. President, for that decision.

We are delighted to host you in Poland. This is also a crucially important sign to us, a sign of security.

Tomorrow we will meet with our allies from the eastern flank of NATO because, to all of us, this visit is crucially important. It is a symbolic visit here to our region. We are seeing it not only as a visit paid here in Poland, it is a visit to our region combined with a visit to Kyiv. It sends a very powerful message of responsibility, which the United States of America carries constantly the responsibility for the security of Europe and the world.

The United States, which has demonstrated on multiple occasions its responsibility for European matters during the First World War, during the Second World War, during the cold war. Every single time, they restored the democratic rules. Every time, the United States brought back freedom. People were able to restore their freedom, sometimes after tens of years, as it was the case in Poland in 1989.

Thanks to the movement of Solidarity, of course, here in Poland; thanks to the determination of the people; thanks to the influence exerted by Saint John Paul II, whom we admire so much—but we know perfectly well this was brought about thanks to a very decisive American policy conducted by the U.S. authorities, by President Ronald Reagan. And at last, the evil empire collapsed. The Berlin wall collapsed as a result, and we regained our freedom.

So all of us, we're looking at what you did yesterday, and we believe that America is able to maintain the global order, to guard the global order, and to show all the aggressors who want to destroy other people's lives, who want to take control of other countries, who want to enslave other nations—it shows that there is no acceptance of the democratic community, represented by the United States of America, to such behavior, to such acts.

Thank you for that from the bottom of my heart. As I said, it sends a very important signal to us—to us, the Polish people. Your presence, Mr. President, is extremely important from the perspective of the security.

We are delighted that you will give your speech, Mr. President, here in Poland. We are delighted that this message will be sent from here, of you, sir—a message addressed to the whole world, because I'm sure that the whole world is going to follow your speech. Thank you for this decision. We are very glad with it.

On the one hand, it proves how it is important for the United States, how our part of Europe is important to the United States from the allied perspective. But also, to us, it is, to a certain extent, a confirmation that we are doing the right thing. The actions which we have been taking recently vis-à-vis Ukraine, by supporting Ukraine, by sending weapons to Ukraine, by helping Ukrainians, by supporting them in all different ways, it is a proof that this is the right path. It is a proof that we are supported in this respect by the United States.

We also try to give the support to our neighbors. And we are trying to be not only the ones who have got the security guaranteed by the United States and NATO, but we try to be the ones who are providing the security to other states.

So the Baltic States, where we are part of the air policing mission. We're providing the security to our allies from Romania, where Polish soldiers are deployed as part of NATO contingent. In Latvia, our soldiers are stationed there as well, and our tanks also are guarding the security of Latvia. So, simply said, we are trying to demonstrate allied solidarity.

Having said that, I'm even more grateful, Mr. President. Thank you for paying this visit here in Poland, because I believe that the Polish people see it also as an appreciation of the contribution that we have made in the construction of the security in our part of Europe. And we are delighted to be able to host you here today, Mr. President.

This also is a powerful signal to the global and American investors—your presence, sir; your speech, sir—it proves that Poland is safe and secure. It is a country where you can safely come from the other side of the globe.

But these distances not seem to be that much. Some people might think that this is a dangerous place, but Poland is safe and secure thanks to the presence of the U.S. Armed Forces, thanks to the presence of NATO troops, and also thanks to our efforts to reinforce Poland's

security, Poland's defense capabilities. We are implementing all of that. And we're happy, Mr. President, that your presence here is a visible sign of this presence.

Recently, we were talking—speaking to our allies in Europe. I did it during my meetings, which I had in London and also at the Munich Security Conference. I was saying that this—these developments and this unique role—which is being played through you, sir, by the United States—shows in a very clear way that a transatlantic bond is of key importance to Europe.

We're here together with the Polish Prime Minister attending this meeting. The Polish Prime Minister, who is the head of the Government, and, by this function, he has in his hands the responsibility for the parliamentary majority today.

In 2025, Poland will take over the Presidency in the European Union. So we want and we will pass a special resolution in May this year. We would like that this resolution marks the anniversary of our presence in the European Union. We would like our Presidency to be conducted under the motto of tightening transatlantic bond, want more America and Europe—stronger bonds between the European Union and the United States, more cooperation between the European Union and the United States in economic matters, in security-related matters, all which is so important to us.

This difficult time which we are experiencing in Europe right now and this extraordinary role played by the United States is an absolute demonstration of the fact that this is of key importance to the security and to the future development of our continent.

So we in Poland have made a lot of experiences over the last centuries in our history and especially over the last 100 years in our history have no doubt about that.

So, Mr. President, once again, we are delighted. And a warm welcome to you, sir.

President Biden. Well, Mr. President, thank you very much for that welcome. And any excuse to come back to Poland, I take advantage of. The welcome has always been extremely generous, and I appreciate it. And so thank you for inviting me back to Warsaw at this critical moment.

You know, you mentioned John Paul. I think I told you the story. When I was a young Senator, I wrote a report and had a very senior staff member on the Foreign Relations Committee who was—and that was a committee—the next youngest person on that committee was 32 years older than me. And I came back from Europe, and I wrote a report saying that Poland would be free within a matter of a year. And my Chief of Staff then said, "Please don't write that because you're going to look foolish."

And I got a phone call from John Paul, asking whether I'd meet with him. And as a practicing Catholic, I joked with him that he was more conservative than my views were. And I went to see him, and we finished the conversation, and it was all about Poland. He never once mentioned anything about Catholicism. [*Laughter*]

No, I swear. It was a true story.

And we were walking from one end—if you've been to the Papal Library, it's about as wide and as long as this room, with a simple desk at one end and nothing much else in it.

And as we—he said, "Would you like a photograph?" And I said, "Sure, Your Holiness, I'd like one." And we were walking from the desk to the other end; we were having a photograph. And he put his hand under my arm, and he said: "Senator, remember, today I spoke to you as a Pole, a proud Pole. Not as your Pope, as a Pole." [*Laughter*]

So I've realized the power of Poland all across the board.

Look, all kidding aside, I—that happens to be a true story.

But you know, I was here last year, and we visited the base where Polish and American troops were, and standing side by side, showing our strength and determination.

The truth of the matter is, the United States needs Poland and NATO as much as NATO needs the United States, because there is no way in which—for our ability to operate anywhere else in the world, and our responsibilities extend beyond Europe, it—we have to have security in Europe. It's that basic, that simple, that consequential.

And so it's the single most consequential alliance, and I would argue maybe the most consequential alliance in history, that—not just modern history, but in history. And so I made it clear that the comments of the United States and our allies as partner—the commitment is real and that, a year later, I would argue NATO is stronger than it's ever been.

I—as I told President Zelenskyy when we spoke in Kyiv yesterday, I can proudly say that our support for Ukraine remains unwavering.

And as I told my Russian counterpart not—well, it was a while now—I said, "You're seeking the Finlandization of NATO. You're going to get the NATOization of Finland." And it turns out, I didn't know Sweden was coming along as well. *[Laughter]*

But all kidding aside, I think we're in—if we keep our head and we are focused, I think we're in a better position than we've ever been.

And I want to thank you, President, for how Poland is supporting Ukraine. It's been extraordinary, Mr. Prime Minister, and Mr. President, what you've done. Truly extraordinary.

Last year, when I was here watching people come across the border and the feeling that—those little children, the looks on their faces; those mothers who are—left behind husbands and fathers. It was just incredible the way you've welcomed them—what is it?—1.6, 1.7 million Ukrainians you've welcomed.

And you know, we—and we reaffirmed our—our ironclad commitment to NATO's collective security, including guaranteeing that the command headquarters for our forces in Europe are going to be in Poland, period. And we're also launching a new strategic partnership with plans to build nuclear power plants and bolster Poland's—energy security for generations to come.

And, Mr. President, the connection between Polish and—Polish and American people is extremely strong and deep.

I was kidding with the President. I was—as a young man, I was born in a coal town of Scranton, Pennsylvania, in northeastern Pennsylvania, in an Irish Catholic neighborhood. Then when coal died, we moved down to Delaware, to a town called Claymont, Delaware, which was a working class town. And—but everyone in town was either Polish or Italian. I grew up feeling self-conscious my name didn't end in an "s-k-i" or an "o."

But all kidding aside, the connection between—I was telling the President the pride, the overwhelming demonstrable pride that Polish Americans feel about Poland and the role you're playing now. We were talking about it. It's extreme.

President Duda. Yes.

President Biden. It is—it is—you would be—if you haven't seen it, you should come and see it.

And so there's a lot of challenges that we have to face, but I'm confident we can do it together and develop our partnership even further as we meet the challenges we're about to face. I'm absolutely confident in that.

So it's a delight to be back, and I'm anxious to get our discussion going, although the President and I solved all the problems in the other room a moment ago. *[Laughter]* There's nothing left to solve.

But, all kidding aside, this is a critical, critical, critical, critical relationship for the United States. And we thank you for all the cooperation and help.

Q. President Biden, do you have any reaction to the—*[inaudible]*—today?

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 2:25 p.m. in the Green Column Hall Presidential Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland. President Duda spoke in Polish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Poland, President Duda.

Locations: Warsaw, Poland.

Names: Duda, Andrzej; Morawiecki, Mateusz; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Zelenskyy, Volodymyr.

Subjects: Finland, North Atlantic Treaty Organization accession bid; North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Poland, assistance to Ukraine; Poland, defense relationship with U.S.; Poland, energy cooperation with U.S.; Poland, President; Poland, President Biden's visit; Poland, Prime Minister; Poland, relations with U.S.; Russian, President; Sweden, North Atlantic Treaty Organization accession bid; Ukraine, President; Ukraine, Relations with Poland; Ukraine, U.S. assistance; Ukraine, war refugees, humanitarian situation.

DCPD Number: DCPD202300129.